



THE MUSLIM CONQUESTS OF EDESSA AND AMIDA (DIARBEKIR)

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Edessa (Urfa; Arabic: Al-Ruhā) and Amida (Diarbekir; Arabic: Āmid) were the administrative centers of the Byzantine or Late Roman provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia. The two cities were at the very center of gravity of some of the most momentous events and violent contests of the seventh century, with great consequences for the future of western Asia and Europe. The inhabitants of those cities did not make the critical decisions that determined their fate. The fortunes they experienced resulted from the actions of governmental and military leaders, whether Byzantine, Sasanian, or Muslim, whose primary world views and interests lay outside of the region of Edessa and Amida. It was a time of testing.

Both cities endured the ravages of war repeatedly in the decades preceding the Muslim conquest. Byzantine Edessa had been the scene of a failed rebellion of 603-05 A.D. against the unpopular and controversial usurper Emperor Phokas (reigned 602-10). The rebel General Narses, Master of the Soldiers in the East (*Magister Militum per Orientem*), was tricked into surrendering to imperial forces and then burned alive. Ruthless purges by authorities loyal to Phokas followed. But the Persian Sasanian King Khusrau II (reigned 590-628) used Phokas' seizure of power and the overthrow and killing of Emperor Maurice (reigned 582-602) as a pretext for war, ostensibly to place Theodosius, a putative son of Maurice, on the imperial throne. Edessa and Amida were early targets of Persian invasion. They soon fell to the Sasanians when the Byzantine military defenses cracked in 610-11 shortly after Heraclius had

overthrown and executed Phokas at Constantinople.¹

Edessa became an important nodal point for Sasanian communications and administrative control of Syria and formerly Byzantine upper Mesopotamia for most of the following two decades. Amida experienced major campaigning. Massive population shifts occurred as Sasanian subjects, both Christian (mainly Nestorian) and Zoroastrian, moved in, while native Christian inhabitants were forcibly transferred east to core Sasanian regions in central Mesopotamia. Deportations were an old policy, and Sasanian authorities at Edessa were planning still more massive compulsory transfers. In short, disruption and suffering were the experience of many residents who were subject to both military and cultural shock. They were compelled to confront refugees, immigrants, soldiers, and administrators from elsewhere who had diverse linguistic, religious, and cultural habits, appearances, and beliefs. Although far from the capital of either empire or of the newly-emerging Islamic polity, the inhabitants of these cities, by virtue of their location, were better and more quickly informed of events than many of the residents of their respective capitals. Decisive events were taking place in their midst. Couriers, refugees, bands of prisoners and military deserters, and regular troops crossed and re-crossed their territories. Inhabitants were forced to learn to cope, to survive, and to adjust to rapidly changing political and military balances and prospects. The wars brought many peoples as well as armies into contact and confrontation.

The Campaigns of Emperor Heraclius

The Persian-Byzantine war ground on under Emperor Heraclius, who probably was of Armenian background although lacking any overt ethnic consciousness.² He passed through the region of Amida during his military operations against the Sasanian Persians in 625 and 628 and returned

¹ See Walter Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 21-25, on Heraclius' background.

there following a victorious campaign in Mesopotamia and a visit to the putative site of Noah's Ark on the Jabal Judi (north of the Lesser Habur, now in southeastern Turkey). His route had taken him through ill-defined parts of "Armenia."³ Heraclius and his brother Theodore re-occupied both Amida and Edessa after their victory over the Sasanians in early 628. Theodore encountered troubles with Jews and with Sasanian Persian soldiers who initially refused orders from their own authorities to evacuate Edessa and return to Persia. A veritable siege ensued. Theodore used catapults to compel the Jews and Sasanian armed forces to withdraw.⁴

Edessa in particular became the object of much direct imperial attention after Heraclius' decisive victory over Persia. He passed through the city on his way to and from Jerusalem in early 630 when he restored what he believed were relics of the True Cross. The Byzantines initially used Edessa as a key base for the reimposition of their regional military and political control. Having secured this, Heraclius then sought to terminate ecclesiastical divisions by winning assent from the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) and Nestorian prelates at Edessa and not distant Hierapolis (Bambyke; Mabbug) in northern Syria. Edessa especially had been very diverse religiously: Jacobites, Nestorians, Armenians, Arabs, Jews, as well as

³ Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, vol. 8 in the series *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1912), p. 465. On the site of Noah's Ark, see Yaqut, *Geographisches Wörterbuch*, ed. Heinrich Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig 1866-1873), vol. 1, pp. 934-35, and vol. 2, p. 144. J.-M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Impr. catholique 1965), pp. 749-54, explains that Jabal Judi was the site visited. Heraclius' brother Theodore may have left an inscription on the repair of city walls at Mayyafariqin (Greek: Martyropolis; Armenian: Nprkert/Martirosats Kaghak; Turkish: Silvan). See Cyril and Marlia Mundell Mango, "Inscriptions de la Mésopotamie du Nord," *Travaux et mémoires de Centre d'histoire et de civilisation de Byzance*, vol. 11 (Paris: De Boccard, 1991), pp. 469-70. It may seem surprising that Heraclius receives no mention if 628 is indeed the date, but there could be explanations for the omission even if he did pass through the city. See "Armenia," in *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Ludwig Dindorf (Bonn: Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, 1829), vol. 1, p. 735; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 184-85, 200-03.

⁴ Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, pp. 452-53, 465-66; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, ed. Jean Babbtiste Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1899-1910), Bk 11, ch. 3 (in the Chabot edition, vol. 2, p. 410).

some Greeks.⁵ Armenians receive no specific mention in either Edessa or Amida at this time. Clashes between Jews and Christians at Edessa were the alleged cause of the emergence of Islam, according to the Armenian source now known as *The History Attributed to Sebeos*, but this story, however interesting, is unreliable. It does not illuminate the history of Armenians at Edessa other than underscoring that the city was full of religious strife and contested identities.⁶ It is not known what percentage of the total population was Armenian. Skilled Christian craftsmen migrated to Edessa from central Iraq during the Sasanian occupation, perhaps to escape undesirable economic, social, and political conditions or merely to improve their own material circumstances. Sebeos reports that Edessa and Amida enjoyed "peace and prosperity" under Sasanian occupation and administration, as the later memory of those times was clearly positive.⁷ Glimpses of that world and its turbulence also peer through the hagiographical narratives about Saint Anastasius the Persian.⁸

It was, then, an era of disturbance and dramatic change. Although the process of restoring Byzantine authority in the region after 628 was not a smooth one, it could have been much worse. Inhabitants suffered a great deal and had to make many adjustments. One has to appreciate this before looking

⁵ On the language situation with special reference to Syriac and Greek usage in Edessa, see David G. Taylor, "Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia," in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language, Context and the Written Text*, ed. J.N. Adams, Mark Jange, and Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 298-331, esp. pp. 324-31.

⁶ For the purported relationship between clashes between Jews and Byzantines at Edessa and the rise of Islam, see Sebeos, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, trans. Robert W. Thomson, comm. James Howard-Johnston (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), ch. 42. For an interpretation, see Robert Hoyland, "Sebeos, the Jews and the Rise of Islam," in Ronald L. Nettler, ed., *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations*, vol. 2, *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations* (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), pp. 89-102. Tim Greenwood has completed an excellent and important doctoral dissertation on Sebeos, including materials on the context of apocalyptic consciousness.

⁷ Sebeos, *History*, p. 63; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 203-05.

⁸ See Bernard Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VI^e siècle* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1992), for important historical commentary.

at the circumstances of the Muslim conquest itself only a few years later. There was no opportunity for stability to prevail. Many believed that they had reasons for grudges and scores to settle. The sources are not, however, explicit about the condition or sentiments of Armenians in either city. Economic dislocations probably took place in addition to the political and ecclesiastical changes. A final note of caution: reliable statistics are lacking. The size of the population, neither gross totals nor demographically segmented portions, is not known, nor is the volume of trade and industry in either city or the material and human losses incurred during those trying times. It is likely that losses were serious but limited, that is, not comparable to those that the inhabitants and buildings of Jerusalem sustained in 614 as a result of the Sasanian assault.

The Battle of Yarmuk and Withdrawal through Edessa

One dramatic event affected both Edessa and Amida in late 636-37 A.D. The Arab Muslim historian al-Tabari, repeating the account of the Muslim traditionist (transmitter) Sayf ibn Umar, plausibly states that in the aftermath of the decisive defeat of Byzantine armies, which included Greek, Armenian, and Christian Arab contingents, in Syria at the battle of the Yarmuk (August 20, 636), Heraclius withdrew from Syria by way of Edessa and then Samosata before proceeding to Constantinople.⁹ No more exact chronology is possible, but one infers a date of late 636 or early 637. Heraclius did visit the Byzantine province of Osrhoene. Edessa was the city that Heraclius needed to hold in order to permit his Armenian

⁹ Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-rusul wa al-muluk (Annales)* [History of the Laws and the Kings], ed. Michael J. de Goeje, 15 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879-1901), cited by internal numbering of manuscript, 2390-91, 2395-96; Azdi al-Basri Muhammad ibn Abd Allah Abu Ismail al-Azdi, *Tarikh futuh al-Sham* [History of the Conquest of Syria], or Al-Basri, *The Fotooh al-Shám: Being an Account of the Moslim Conquests in Syria*. . . , ed. William Nassau Lees (Calcutta: Baptist Missionary Press, 1854), p. 213; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* [The Nobility in History], ed. Carl J. Tornberg, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1965-1967), vol. 2, p. 384.

troops to withdraw properly from Syria.¹⁰ Al-Tabari's statement concerning the retreat of Heraclius from Syria via Edessa and Samosata (and not directly through the Cilician Gates from Antioch) may well be authentic.

Heraclius does appear to have been trying to stabilize the military situation southeast of the Taurus Mountains before proceeding onto the Anatolian plateau and the Asian shores of the Bosphorus. He was not fleeing pell-mell after the defeat of his armies at the Yarmuk. He executed a skillful withdrawal under the circumstances. The precise chronology and itinerary are unclear.¹¹ Extreme skeptics might, of course, question whether Muslim sources really refer to Heraclius himself or merely in some generic fashion to Byzantine armies, personalizing them under the name of Heraclius.¹² The best judgment, however, is that Heraclius and his entourage did evacuate Syria by way of Edessa and Samosata. It is probable that sizable number of his soldiers were Armenian. Reports of Heraclius' order for the recovery and destruction of Melitene (Malatia) and for implementation of a scorched-earth policy near Antioch and Cilicia indicate that he continued to try to build up defenses at the outer edge of Asia Minor and that he was not incapacitated following the battle of Yarmuk. His anger at the willingness of the *curator* John of Kateas to arrange a truce with the Muslims and John's deposition and replacement by a more forceful military commander is consistent with the vigorous efforts made elsewhere to try to harden resistance and even to launch counterattacks.¹³

¹⁰ Judah B. Segal, *Edessa, 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 247-48.

¹¹ Fred M. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 150.

¹² Note comments of Suleiman Bashear, "The Mission of Dihya al-Kalbi and the Situation in Syria," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 84-114; repr. in *Der Islam* (1997). His work is primarily useful for legendary materials, not historical reality. He is unfamiliar with basic Byzantine history and did not concern himself with problems in the vicinity of Edessa and Amida.

¹³ Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, p. 2349; Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan* [Conquest of Countries], ed. Michael J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 164; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, p. 424). On the route from Egypt to Melitene, see the schematization by Konrad Miller, *Itineraria romana*

Heraclius' presumably short stay in Edessa in retreat from Syria nevertheless put him in a city that he knew well. It was there he previously (630) had negotiated concerning ecclesiastical reunion, and where he had handed over the cathedral to one church faction—naturally the Chalcedonian because he favored it over Monophysitism. He understood and appreciated the city's strategic significance. It is noteworthy that in late 636, after the destruction of much of his best armies at the hands of the Muslims, Heraclius did not take the shortest route out of Syria. Instead, he chose to cover Armenia and his communications with Persia and with friendly Arab tribes.

Such a withdrawal from Syria via Edessa brought consequences. Muslim military forces understandably tracked his withdrawal to prevent some crafty Byzantine counteroffensive. Scholars have debated whether the Muslims invaded upper Mesopotamia from Syria or from Iraq. This controversy reflects analyses of conflicting Muslim historical traditions. No original documents or archives survive from that era concerning this problem. Most extant Arabic and Syriac literary historical or annalistic records date from the ninth century or later. The preponderance of evidence, reinforced by a rereading of Sebeos' *History*, indicates that Muslims from Syria, in particular those under the command of the skillful Muslim general Iyad ibn Ghanm al-Fihri at the behest of his commander Abu Ubayda ibn Jarrah, first penetrated to Edessa and Amida and imposed terms on the respective leaders and inhabitants of those cities. Most scholars of Islamic history accept the views of Islamicists Wilferd Madelung and Fred Donner that whatever the difficulties, there is ultimately a genuine core of historical traditions within Islamic memory.¹⁴

(Stuttgart: Strecker and Strecker, 1916), pp. 680-84; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Carol De Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), A.M. 6128, p. 340; *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans., intro., comm., Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 472. On the alleged illness of Heraclius, see Nicephorus, *Short History*, 24-25, 27, trans. and comm. Cyril Mango (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), pp. 72, 77.

¹⁴ Fred M. Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins* (Princeton: Darwin, 1998), pp. 289-96; Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. xi. For dissenting views, see Albrecht Noth and Lawrence

The principal Edessene source is the lost history or chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa (died circa 785 A.D.), whose work survives in fragmentary form in several extant histories in Greek (*Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*), Arabic (Agapius of Mambij), and Syriac (*Chronicle of Michael the Syrian*, and other shorter chronicles).¹⁵ Heraclius had normally kept Constantinopolitans informed of his military activities against the Sasanians during the 620s, especially victorious ones, through military bulletins or open letters, but there is no reference to any such communications emanating from his stay in the vicinity of Edessa or Amida in 636-37.¹⁶ According to the early Islamic jurist Abu Yusuf Yaqub, the inhabitants of the countryside but not those of the towns of upper Mesopotamia (Jazira) were subject to a basic land tax, payable in kind, on the eve of the Islamic conquest.¹⁷

Echoes of events remained embedded in Arabic versified form, even if out of context. The poet al-Asha, for example, preserved the memory of a humiliating Byzantine defeat (*yawm Satidama*) in 625 at the hands of Arabs allied with the Persians at the Saudama Valley (Nymphios River, or modern Turkish Batman Su, not distant from Martyropolis (Mayyafariqin; Farkin).¹⁸ Before reaching the Saudama valley, Heraclius would have passed by or through the site of ancient

I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton: Darwin, 1994).

¹⁵ On this complex issue, see Lawrence I. Conrad, "The Conquest of Arwad: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East," in Averil Cameron and Lawrence Conrad, eds., *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 1: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton: Darwin, 1992), pp. 339-40.

¹⁶ James Howard-Johnston, "The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," in Edward Dabrowa, ed., *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East* (Krakow: Uniwersytet Jagiellon'ski. Instytut Historii, 1994), pp. 57-87.

¹⁷ Abu Yusuf Yaqub, *Kitab al-kharaj, Ihsan Abbas* [History of Taxation] (Beirut: Dar Shiruk, 1985), pp. 136-38.

¹⁸ Rudolf Geyer, *Gedichte von Abu Bashir ibn Maimun al-'A'sha* (London, 1928), poem 36, verse 10, p. 160; *The Geography of Ananias of Širak: Ašxarhac 'oyc'*, trans. and comm. Robert H. Hewsen (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1992), pp. 59, 160-61n45-46, 162n50-51; Josef Markwart, *Südarmenien und die Tigrisquellen* (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1930), pp. 270-74, explication of the al-Asha poem, p. 271. On the battle at Saudama, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 131-32.

Tigranocerta (Tigranakert), which, according to Thomas Sinclair, is located at Garzan near the Nikephorion (Yanarsu) River.¹⁹ Heraclius probably did not recognize the ancient Armenian site.

The Byzantine Salient in Mesopotamia

Some facts are simple to understand. Byzantine retention of Mesopotamia first compelled the Muslim commanders in Syria and Iraq to divert troops from some other potential targets, in particular Anatolia. Second, it helped to hold a forward base that could serve as a springboard for a Byzantine counteroffensive to recover lost territory or for joint action with the remaining Sasanian forces, given Heraclius' recent good relations with the Persians after decades of Byzantine-Persian warfare. Third, it partially protected the Byzantine Empire's Armenian territories, which were valuable recruiting grounds for soldiers and commanders. At the time, it was not clear that the Muslims would be able to consolidate their hold on Syria, and that Byzantine possession of Mesopotamia would provide a valuable listening post and a place from which to counterattack or spread dissension among the inhabitants of the newly-occupied territories. Fourth, Byzantine retention of Mesopotamia could affect Heraclius' recruitment among Arab tribesmen, whom he had employed in the 620s in his successful comeback against the Persians.

Heraclius probably left some Byzantine troops in Persia, specifically in Mesopotamia, in order to maintain Byzantine influence over the Persians, to create a buffer on his own eastern frontier, and to stabilize the internal Persian situation. It may have served as a necessary prop to a friendly but weak Sasanian government that he had installed in power and that was facing potential internal unrest.²⁰ Yet there were limits to

¹⁹ Thomas Sinclair, "The Site of Tigranocerta," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 25 (1994-95): 183-254, and 26 (1996-97): 51-117. His thesis is persuasive.

²⁰ The clearest evidence for contemporary Byzantine anxiety about the Sasanian Empire and the desirability of preserving it from falling into chaos is Theophylact Simocatta's composition of a speech, written sometime between 628 and 640, which

Heraclius' ability to control events and trends. The principal problem was that such an extended Byzantine presence, however token, also strained and overextended Byzantine communications, manpower, and finances while offering little real resistance to the Muslims.

It was natural that the Muslims, once having conquered most of Syria and Iraq, would want to eliminate the salient or bulge of Byzantine Mesopotamia in order to consolidate their gains. For Byzantium, on the other hand, the strategic area was also agriculturally fertile and worth retaining. This made it all the more important that Heraclius hold on to the provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia in order to preserve communications and to be able to reinforce the Byzantine garrisons. Because some Byzantine troops were stationed in Iraq, there was presumably the temptation and hope that coordinated action with the Persians against the Muslims could be implemented.

The long war with the Persians left many legacies for the subsequent Byzantine-Muslim conflict. Even though circumstances seemed to dictate the Byzantine evacuation of Mesopotamia, this was made all the more difficult when there was the recent experience of occupying part of Iraq. To contemporaries, Heraclius' victory over the Persians may have strongly affected perceptions and calculations about strategy and military operations after the Muslim conquest of Syria. From the Muslim perspective, it was critical to prevent any repetition of the successful Byzantine recruiting among Armenians in the 620s.²¹ For Muslim military interests, in addition to eliminating the Byzantine bulge and threat to communications, capturing Mesopotamia was the necessary prelude to occupying

he attributed to ambassadors of Chosroes (Khasrau) II to Maurice in 590. See Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiae*, IV.xiii.9, IV.xiii.13.

²¹ Possible additional confirmation is the hypothesis that the famous Mardaites of the late seventh century may have been stationed earlier in various parts of the Byzantine province of Armenia IV, which included Mardes (Mardin) in upper Mesopotamia. See Hratch Bartikian, "He luse ton ainigmaton ton Mardaiton" [The Solution of the Mysteries of the Mardaites], in Zia Stratos, ed., *Byzantion: Aphieroma ston Andrea N. Strato... Byzantium: Tribute to Andreas N. Stratos*, 2 vols. (Athens: N.A. Stratou, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 17-39.

the four Byzantine Armenian provinces, thereby denying Heraclius access to new Armenian recruits. These probable motives emerge from reflection on the actual military situation in the 630s and the preceding military historical events.²²

The Byzantines, including Heraclius and his advisers, also may have been thinking, however vainly, of the possibility of some repetition of the dramatic recuperation and counteroffensives of the 620s. The result was to leave Byzantium, after evacuation of most of Syria, maintaining widely dispersed forces in Egypt and Mesopotamia, in addition to completely isolated garrisons in such Palestinian ports as Caesarea and Gaza. In short, the remaining Byzantine forces were scattered in diverse directions, unable to concentrate.²³ The Muslims held a central position from which they could freely strike to the west, north, and northeast.

The continued Byzantine occupation of Mesopotamia in 637-38 and subsequent efforts to send more troops there under General Dawit (David) Urtaya and Titus, in 640, temporarily diverted the Muslims from more serious attacks into Anatolia or toward Constantinople and may have given Heraclius additional time for the implementation of scorched-earth policies in Cilicia and more carefully planned fortification of key points in Asia Minor. Nevertheless, Mesopotamia drew away important Byzantine forces and attention from the defense of Egypt, which was an even more tempting Muslim target of opportunity.²⁴ Mesopotamia was at the end of a complex line of communications through Armenia III and IV which was difficult to maintain after the loss of the rest of northern Syria (Euphratesia and Antioch).²⁵

²² On the Muslim conquest of Armenia, see Walter Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 181-204.

²³ On the wide dispersal of those who fled after the battle of the Yarmuk, see Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 135.

²⁴ Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, chs. 7, 10 (Chabot, vol. 2, pp. 424, 441-43); Walter Kaegi, "Egypt on the Eve of the Muslim Invasion," *Cambridge History of Egypt*, Carl Petry, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 34-61.

²⁵ Walter Kaegi, "The Earliest Muslim Penetrations of Anatolia," in *Byzantine*

Tentative Truces

The Byzantine chronicler Theophanes (early ninth century) as well as Michael the Syrian state that John Kateas, the *epitropos* (curator) of the province of Osrhoene, who governed it from the city of Edessa, came to Qinnasrin (ancient Chalkis, the modern village of al-Is) in Syria, presumably in 637, to make a pact ("he arranged") with the Muslim general Iyad ibn Ghanm by agreeing to pay 100,000 gold *nomismata* (72 *nomismata* = 1 Roman pound) annually. In return, the Muslims pledged "not to cross the Euphrates, either peacefully or in a state of war, so long as the Byzantines pay the amount of gold." This agreement protected the Byzantine territories in Mesopotamia by guarding against any pretext of nomadic transhumant movement being used to introduce Arabs across the Euphrates River.²⁶ When Heraclius learned of this agreement, he dismissed and exiled John Kateas and replaced him with Ptolemaios, *tina stratelaten* (a certain general), who refused at its expiration to renew the truce on the previous terms.²⁷

Ptolemaios' appointment and refusal to pay tribute immediately led to Iyad ibn Ghanm's invasion. Crossing the Euphrates, he seized Callinicum (Rakka/Raqqa) and Edessa and then

State and Society in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides, eds. Anna Avramea, Angeliki Laiou, and Evangelos Chrysos (Athens: Center for Byzantine Studies, 2003), pp. 269-82; John F. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

²⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6128 (De Boor, p. 340); Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, pp. 476-77; Lawrence I. Conrad, "Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990): 1-45; Donald R. Hill, *Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests, A.D. 634-656* (London: Luzac, 1971), pp. 84-99. Transhumant movement was common in the region. The concepts of *sulhan* and *anawatan* may not be contemporary with the conquests. See Albrecht Noth, "Some Remarks on the 'Nationalisation' of Conquered Lands at the Time of the Umayyads," in Tarif Khalidi, ed., *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1984), pp. 223-28; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 147-48.

²⁷ See the reservations of Wolfram Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau, 2002); and the observations of Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton: Darwin, 1997), pp. 76, 586-87.

imposed similar capitulation terms on the rest of the towns of the area, all of which fell within a year.²⁸ Kufi calls the patrician at Edessa "Mitūlus," who is otherwise unknown.²⁹ He asserts that Heraclius had angrily placed "Copts" over Rakka/Callinicum after recovering it from the Persians. That decision had alienated the otherwise unknown patrician Bintus, who negotiated the terms with Iyad ibn Ghanm and some others of the local elite.³⁰ Antagonisms that dated to the harsh justice meted out at Edessa by Heraclius and his brother Theodore on recovering Edessa from the Persians may have alienated portions of the city's leadership and disposed them to consider making terms with the Muslims. Only a few towns required violent assault before the rest yielded to the Muslim invaders. This conquest took place between 638 and 640 A.D. (A.H. 17-19). Tella, Dara, and Ras al-Ayn (Ras ul-Ayn) fiercely resisted, and a part of their inhabitants were slain.³¹ Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*, also dates the Muslim conquest of Edessa to A.H. 19 or 639-40.³² Muhammad ibn Ali al-Azimi's neglected history of Aleppo, *Tarikh Halab*, gives the date of 16 A.H. for Iyad ibn Ghanm's conquest of Saruj, Edessa, Nisibis, Rakka, Mesopotamia, and Ayn Warda.³³ His account is terse. Edessa and Amida apparently agreed to pay

²⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6128 (De Boor, p. 340); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, p. 426); Michel Kaplan, "Quelques aspects des maisons divines," *Aphieroma ston Niko Syvono*, in Vasiles Kremmydas, Chrysa Maltezou et al., eds. (Rethymno: University of Crete, 1986), esp. pp. 76-96. According to Kaplan, pp. 89-90, this office of *curator* was combined with other offices including military responsibilities in Syria.

²⁹ Kufi Abu Muhammad Ahmad Ibn Atham al-Kufi, *Kitab al-futuh* [Book of the Conquest], ed. Muhammad Ali al-Abbasi and Sayyid Abd al-Wahhab Bukhari, 8 vols. (Hyderabad: Dairat al-Maarif al-Uthmaniyya, 1968-1975), vol. 1, p. 331.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 326-29; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, p. 426). Nadine Posner, "The Muslim Conquest of Northern Mesopotamia" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1985), pp. 336-38.

³¹ Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, p. 426).

³² Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq* [History of the City of Damascus], ed. Umar Gharama Amrawi, 70 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995-1998), vol. 47, pp. 277-78.

³³ Muhammad ibn Ali Azimi, *Tarikh Halab* [History of Aleppo], ed. Ibrahim Zarur (Damascus, 1984), p. 167. This is a relatively late source (twelfth-century) but is well regarded according to Paul Cobb of the University of Notre Dame.

head tax (*jizya*) and appear otherwise to have suffered no immediate human or material damages. Their terms were comparable to those that other cities in their regions accepted. Armenian inhabitants surely contributed to the payment of the tax obligations.

The Muslim conquest of Mesopotamia took very little time and, to judge from sources, involved no major battles or significant military innovation. The Byzantine forces were completely outnumbered, and Ptolemaios did not wish to risk the annihilation of his valuable remaining manpower in hopeless combat. The historian Agapius reconfirms this information, although he identifies the governor as Paul, whom he asserts was punished for making peace by being exiled to Africa.³⁴ Heraclius probably wanted his governor to hold on to Mesopotamia without fighting: "Let no one engage in any more fighting with the Taiyyayê [Arabs]; but let him who can hold his position remain in it."³⁵ This instruction is consistent with his earlier order to Theodore Trithurios before the battle of the Yarmuk to avoid open battle with the Muslims.

The historical background has been distorted by the lack of accurate understanding of Late Roman and Byzantine place-names in Syria, such as the fact that ancient Chalkis became medieval Qinnasrin. Inconsistent and contradictory identification impeded scholarly appreciation of the true significance of Chalkis in the narratives of events.³⁶ The truce that John Kateas signed temporarily protected Mesopotamia at Chalkis. The Muslim signatory was Iyad ibn Ghanm, or, according to Eutychius, his superior commander, Abu Ubayda, Iyad ibn

³⁴ Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, pp. 476-77. It is incorrect to assume that local kinglets or dynasts, whose existence lacks independent confirmation, ruled the various towns of Byzantine Mesopotamia on the eve of the Muslim conquests. Such conditions are inconceivable after the Byzantine re-conquest of the region from the Persians. Posner, "Muslim Conquest," p. 179, is mistaken in asserting that cities such as Edessa, Harran, Mardin, and Circesium "were ruled by local dynasts and kinglets."

³⁵ Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, p. 424); cf. Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, pp. 471-72.

³⁶ Leone Caetani, *Annali dell' Islam*, 10 vols. (Milan: U. Hoepli, 1905-1926; repr. Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1972), vol. 4, p. 46, where Chalkis is incorrectly identified, and p. 814, where it is correctly identified.

Ghanm.³⁷ Its scope embraced not only Mesopotamia but apparently also some of northern Syria. The conquest of Balis and Qasirin in northern Syria by Abu Ubayda accompanied by the withdrawal of many of the Greeks there to the Byzantine Empire, Mesopotamia, and Jisr Mambij, is probably part of the same truce and withdrawal arrangement made at Qinnasrin by Abu Ubayda. He apparently advanced as far as the Euphrates in 637. This preceded any Muslim crossing of the river as well as the peace that Theophanes states the Byzantines made at Qinnasrin for the protection of Byzantine Mesopotamia, including Edessa.

The Byzantines, at least nominally, retained control of Chalkis at the time of the signing of the truce. There was still an anonymous Byzantine *patricius* at Chalkis, and presumably he was different from John Kateas, who came there from Osrhoene to conclude the truce. The truce (or perhaps truces) temporarily stabilized a dangerous military situation. The Muslims were deterred from exploiting the possibility of a breakthrough and deep penetration. They received money and the opportunity to consolidate their gains as well as to rid themselves of segments of the local populations that were hostile to the new regime.

The military significance of the region of Chalkis for early Byzantine defenses has long received recognition, even though investigators were unable to disentangle fortifications and structures of varying periods with absolute clarity. Chalkis was a vital crossroads that dominated the intersection of east-west communications between Antioch and the Euphrates, and north-south ones, between Hims (Emesa), Damascus, and other inland Syrian cities, on the one hand, and the upper Syrian military strongholds, Edessa, and Melitene, on the other. It was a logical place to attempt to stabilize a secondary Byzantine defense line that protected much of northern Syria after the debacle of the battle of Yarmuk. Its control preserved for the Byzantines, however temporarily, the valuable agricul-

³⁷ Eutychius, *Annalenwerk*, p. 282, Michael Breydy, ed. (Louvain: Peters, 1985), pp. 141-42 text, pp. 120-21 trans.; Pseudo-Waqidi, *Futuh al-Sham* [Conquest of Syria] (Beirut, 1972), pp. 114-15.

tural and olive-producing areas of the "Massif Calcaire" of northern Syria and also helped to protect Byzantine Mesopotamia.³⁸ It was strategically sound to try to hold it by means of a truce.

The duration of the peace terms was extended in the trans-Euphrates Byzantine territories, that is, Mesopotamia and Osrhoene, until 639, when the Muslims invaded on the pretext of the Byzantine failure to pay the stipulated tribute. These improvisations had their political aspects. The Muslims knew that the Byzantine requests for a truce could have had as an ulterior motive the intent to bring up more men for a counter-attack. Yet the temporary truce lines traversed routes that transhumant Arabs often had used before the Muslim invasions. Thus, in reality, the frontier agreed on for Mesopotamia was one that the Byzantine authorities accepted because they were afraid of Arabs peacefully crossing it and then inflicting harm on the Byzantine forces.

Dissatisfaction with General Manuel in Egypt and with the governor of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, John Kateas, reinforced Heraclius' resolve to maintain tight central control over the empire's borders, such as they were. He did not wish diplomatic relations to fall into the hands of local authorities, who might act without consulting him on important matters.³⁹ In similar fashion, by issuing orders to hold out as long as possible against the Muslims but not to attack them on the open battlefield, Heraclius was attempting to establish a common policy and guideline for local administrators to prevent harmful ad hoc arrangements.⁴⁰ That was also part of the process of creating a very clear reach of imperial authority

³⁸ See Georges Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, 3 vols. (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1953-1958). Donald Whitecomb of the Chicago's Oriental Institute has begun a new archaeological survey of Chalkis.

³⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6128 (De Boor, p. 340); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, pp. 425-26); cf. Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, pp. 471-72, 476-78. See Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6126 (De Boor, pp. 338-39), on Egyptian peace, with Amr ibn al-Âs, but note the skepticism of Paul Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier* (Bonn: Habelt, 1986), pp. 182-85, 190, 398-403, 410-12; and Hill, *Termination of Hostilities*, pp. 84-99.

⁴⁰ Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, Bk 11, ch. 7 (Chabot, vol. 2, pp. 424-25).

directly to the limits of the frontier.

The truces at Chalkis were somewhat comparable to the one that the Byzantine governor of Egypt, Cyrus, negotiated for the protection of Egypt, according to Theophanes and Agapius. Skeptics of the historicity of that truce have failed to take into account similar truces in other areas. Although it may seem illogical that the Muslims would have accepted such truces when they had the momentum, they may have wished to consolidate their positions and profit financially from the required tribute. The description of these truces by Agapius, Theophanes, Michael the Syrian, and Eutychius—all of whom may derive their information from a single source of Syrian Christian origin—seriously undermines the arguments of skeptics about any truce agreement regarding Egypt between the Byzantines and the Muslims. Some details of the truce for northern Syria and Mesopotamia are credible, even though many questions remain unclear. There was a truce, indeed a series of truces, on various fronts.⁴¹

Theophanes and Agapius—or more properly, their source (probably Theophilus of Edessa)—state that Heraclius became angry with both Byzantine governors, John Kateas in Osrhoene and Cyrus in Egypt. His wrath had several causes, perhaps first of all the expense and concomitant loss of tax revenue at a time of great fiscal exigency because both officials had purchased expensive truces with the Muslims. He also removed these officials because they had made these arrangements without his permission. The replacements were both military commanders: Ptolemaios, who was an unspecified *stratelates* (*magister militum* is the normal rendering, although at this late date it could be a generic term for a military

⁴¹ For critics regarding the truce, see Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion*, rev. by P.M. Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 202-03, 480-82; Alexander Beihammer, *Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu den ägyptischen Kapitulationsverträgen der Jahre 640-646* (Vienna: Akademie, 2000), pp. 21-29. For arguments in favor of the authenticity of earlier negotiations with the Muslims, see "The Conquest of Egypt," in Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, pp. 574-91. Note the *urkun* or *arkhon* (Byzantine official) of Cyprus who negotiated a separate peace with Mu'awiya in 648-49. See Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 153.

commander), and Manuel, who boasted that he was not *aoplos* (unarmed) but *enoplos* (armed). Heraclius also selected another military figure, Menas, to rule over Chalkis/Qinnasrin. These appointments add credibility to the statements of Kufi and Azdi about the preparations made by Heraclius to resist the Muslim appointments of military commanders over cities at an earlier stage in the Byzantine effort to resist the invaders.⁴²

The Byzantine or Late Roman provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia may then have been administratively dependent on Chalkis/Qinnasrin, as the Muslim historian al-Yaqubi claims. That may be the reason that John Kateas of Osrhoene went to Qinnasrin to sign the truce agreement. The sources do not say explicitly, but the truce probably had at least two parts, one for Chalkis and vicinity, perhaps extending to the northernmost limits of Syria, and one for Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, for which Kateas signed. There is no report that Heraclius disapproved of any provisions for Syria itself, even though he objected to the participation of Kateas for Osrhoene and Mesopotamia. Theophanes indicates that the truce for Mesopotamia was renewable on full payment of the stipulated tribute, while Eutychius describes the provisions for the vicinity of Chalkis as having a very finite and terminal period of one year, without any presumption of the possibility of renewal.⁴³

⁴² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6126, 6128 (De Boor, pp. 338, 340), first reference for Manuel's statements about being armed. For doubts, see Beihammer, *Quellenkritische Untersuchungen*. Cf. Agapius, *Histoire nestorienne*, pp. 71-72; Speck, *Das geteilte Dossier*, pp. 182-85, 190. For Menas, see ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab min Tarikh al Halab* [The Cream of Aleppo from the History of Aleppo] (Damascus, 1951), vol. 1, pp. 25-26; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, pp. 2393-94; Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, pp. 130, 144-45; Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. 3, pp. 791-93. Theophanes' information about the appointment of armed commanders gains credibility when compared with traditions reported by Azdi, *Tarikh futuh al-Sham*, p. 31; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, p. 2104; Kufi, *Kitab al-futuh*, vol. 1, pp. 100-01.

⁴³ Al-Yaqubi, *Tarikh*, Th. Houtsma, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1883), vol. 1, p. 177; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6126, 6128 (De Boor, pp. 338, 340). The information of Caetani is disjointed: *Annali dell'Islam*, vol. 3, pp. 789-92, 799-800, 814-15, and vol. 4, pp. 32-48.

The Armenian Connection

Nothing is known of the soldiers and officers who were under the command of Ptolemaios. The character, number, and quality of the existing Byzantine troops in upper Mesopotamia is likewise unknown. The area had long supported substantial Byzantine garrisons for protection against the Persians. It had been heavily fortified and presumably had good warehouses and logistical backup, given the lengthy local tradition of major Byzantine armies being stationed there. Muslim sources state that a substantial number of troops who fought against them came from the Christian Arab tribes of the area.⁴⁴ It is unclear how many non-Arab Byzantine soldiers were there. It was located very close to Armenia, so that it would have been easy to recruit hardy Armenians to serve in the vicinity.

It is possible to infer more about Armenians. A sizable number of the Byzantine troops who attempted to defend Mesopotamia against the Muslims were likely of Armenian origin.⁴⁵ A prominent Armenian commander was identified as "Rubil al-Armani," although the source, Pseudo-Waqidi, is suspicious.⁴⁶ Another commander, reportedly of 4,000 Byzantine soldiers, was Yuryak the Armenian ("Yuryak al-Armani"), who is otherwise unknown.⁴⁷ He is said to have assisted in the unsuccessful defense of Circesium. Pseudo-Waqidi also claims that "Kilük" the Armenian was ruler (*sahib*) of Edessa, but there is no other source for this dubious information.⁴⁸ Another famous unsuccessful combatant against the Muslims, this time in the defense of Harran, was

⁴⁴ Muslim sources on Byzantine recruitment from Mesopotamia, presumably from the region's Christian Arab tribes, include al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, pp. 2393-94, 2498-2504, 2594; Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 149; Azdi, *Tarikh futuh al-Sham*, p. 152; Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*, vol. 1, pp. 144-45.

⁴⁵ *Libri Wakedii De Mesopotamiae expugnatae historia*, ed. Georg Heinrich August von Ewald (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1827), p. 18. See also Pseudo-Waqidi, *Futuh al-Sham*, p. 111.

⁴⁶ Ewald, *Libri Wakedii*, p. 19.

⁴⁷ Pseudo-Waqidi, *Futuh al-Sham*, p. 106.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

“Arjūk” the Armenian.⁴⁹ Moreover, the lord of Akhlat reportedly sent 4,000 cavalry under his daughter Taryun to Shahryad ibn Farūn for the defense of Ras al-Ayn.⁵⁰ This relief force passed through Bitlis and Hisn Kayfa (Hasankeyf) which underscores their military importance for the campaigning in Mesopotamia. Armenia could not, if these reported actions have any historical reality, be ignored by the Muslims.

If these accounts are true, it would make it easier to comprehend how the Muslim campaign to overrun Mesopotamia necessarily involved the need to conquer or neutralize the strategic areas of neighboring Armenia. Later Muslim traditions attributed a major role to Armenians in the final moments of the Byzantine defense of Mesopotamia. Although the actual names and particulars may be confused and it is impossible to ascertain their numbers or proportions in the Byzantine army, it is plausible that Armenians were prominent in political and military roles in the waning period of Byzantine rule in Mesopotamia.

Armenia and Armenians had provided the springboard for Heraclius’ successful efforts to create a Byzantine military recovery against the Persians in the 620s. It might have been thought in the late 630s that Byzantium might be capable of repeating such a recovery against the Muslims if control of Mesopotamia and Byzantine Armenia could be maintained. The Byzantine decision to try to hold Mesopotamia was not in fact a part of any brilliant grand strategy. Under certain conditions the almost accidental survival of this salient could have been an embarrassment or threat to the Muslim positions in Syria and Iraq, but it soon became apparent that the Byzantine Empire lacked the resources for a comeback comparable to that of the 620s. Moreover, the efforts of the caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar to gain control of all Arabs of Syria and Palestine (previously participants in Heraclius’ campaigns) potentially deprived Byzantium of a major source of military manpower that was an alternative to that of the Armenians.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵¹ Several works of dubious quality attributed to al-Waqidi narrate the Muslim

It is better to excise from consideration any references to some failed Byzantine effort to recapture Hims (Emesa) by engaging in military operations in the vicinity of Edessa and Amida in the mid-seventh century. Some Muslim sources, notably ibn al-Athir and al-Tabari who use traditions that Sayf ibn Umar transmitted, underscore the problem of the population at Hims rising against the Muslims in favor of Heraclius, who allegedly supported them by persuading troops from Byzantine Mesopotamia to go to their assistance.⁵² This Byzantine relief effort did not work because the Byzantine forces pulled back on news of a Muslim threat from Iraq to their own homelands in Mesopotamia.⁵³

No references exist in the primary sources to any massive flight of civilians from Edessa or Amida or their surrounding countryside in anticipation of or as a consequence of the Muslim conquests. More specifically, nothing is written about the fate of Armenians. Officials, important Chalcedonian ecclesiastics, and military personnel did, as elsewhere in Syria and Egypt, leave. Flashes of apocalyptic rumors may have circulated. Some sources report strange comets. But most apocalyptic visions and other references appear to date from Mesopotamia in the decades that immediately followed the

conquest of Mesopotamia. In addition to the Beirut edition of Pseudo-Waqidi's *Futuh al-Sham*, there is Ewald's *Libri Wakedii De Mesopotamiae* from a Göttingen manuscript, and *Codex Arabicus*, CXXXVII, from the Kongelige Bibliotheca of Copenhagen. The latter manuscript appears to contain fabricated material and must be used only with the greatest caution and reserve. Both the Göttingen and Copenhagen manuscripts appear to be late in date. They contain similar material but are not reliable regarding the Byzantine authorities and commanders in Mesopotamia at that time.

⁵² Yaqut, *Geographisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, p. 73; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, pp. 2393-94, 2498-2503, 2594; al-Tabari, *Chronique* (Zotenberg, vol. 3, pp. 425-30). Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 1, pp. 25-29; Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 149; ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. 2, p. 413. In one wholly false tradition (Sayf), Heraclius led the drive to retake Hims: al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, pp. 2501-02; Posner, "Muslim Conquest," esp. pp. 246-92.

⁵³ Lawrence Conrad has demonstrated the tendentiousness, confusion, and worthlessness of most references in Arabic or other languages to such activities at Hims (Homs). See Conrad, "The Conquest of Arwad: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East," in Cameron and Conrad, *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 1, pp. 339-40.

conquests.⁵⁴

The attention of the new Muslim rulers of Syria was diverted briefly to consolidating communications with Iraq and eliminating any possibility of a Byzantine or Byzantine-Christian Arab thrust to recover Syria. Thus it delayed a Muslim assault on Asia Minor and, ultimately, on Constantinople. Events of those years are so obscure that it is difficult to make a confident judgment, but the maneuvering in Byzantine Mesopotamia and around Samosata and Melitene should not be overlooked in trying to understand how certain historical contingencies contributed to the survival of Byzantine Asia Minor despite military catastrophes in Palestine and Syria. What Heraclius and his advisers and generals needed most after the debacle in Syria was time. Their insistence on trying to resist and retain, even for a fleeting time, Chalkis, Osrhoene, Mesopotamia, and Euphrates cities such as Melitene contributed to providing some of that valuable time.

Bearing in mind the role of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia in the border warfare of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, both the Byzantine and Muslim antagonists had good reason for still believing in their importance in the late 630s, but the conditions that had produced that strategic frame of mind were soon to disappear permanently. Although the Byzantines temporarily regained Osrhoene, including Edessa, they never recovered the province of Mesopotamia after losing it in A.H. 17-18 (638-39 A.D.). With that irrevocable loss disappeared any conception of the area as the essential pivot for warfare such as it had played in the long Byzantine-Persian (and previous Roman-Parthian) wars, to be replaced by the tedious and very difficult struggle for the Taurus Mountain passes and the access points to the Anatolian plateau, a new eastern frontier.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 204-20.

⁵⁵ John Haldon and Hugh Kennedy, "The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands," *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloshki Institut* (Belgrade) 19 (1980): 79-116. For one hostile Christian perspective from North Mesopotamia on the Byzantines, see S.P. Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkaye's *Rish Melle*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987): 51-75.

The alert and aggressive Muslim commander Iyad ibn Ghanm overran Byzantine Mesopotamia in 639-40, while other Muslims under Amr ibn al-As began their invasion of Egypt in December 639. In the following year, 640, Muslims invaded Byzantine Armenia from Mesopotamia under the command of Iyad ibn Ghanm. That same year Byzantine generals Dawit Urtaya and Titus undertook an abortive campaign in Mesopotamia, and there may have been some kind of failed Byzantine raid toward Hims. The year 640 also saw the fall of Caesarea in Palestine. On February 11, 641, Heraclius died, followed within two months by the death of Heraclius Constantine or Constantine III and the intensification of the Byzantine succession quarrel. In late 641, Martina and her son Heraklonas were overthrown, which left Constans II as sole Byzantine emperor. In early 642, the Byzantine Empire suffered from the abortive revolt of General Valentinus, the loss of Egypt, and the beginning of the Muslim invasion of Cyrenaica. In 642-43, the second Muslim invasion of Armenia took place. The Byzantine government's attention was diverted from Armenia in 644 by the first Muslim expedition to Amorion, by the unsuccessful revolt of Gregory the Exarch in Africa in 647, and by the Muslim raid and invasion of Cyprus in 649.

The year 650 marked the third Muslim invasion of Armenia, which concluded with a three-year truce negotiated by the Byzantine envoy Procopios with Mu'awiya, governor of Syria. In 652, there was a conspiracy of some Armenian commanders and troops in the Byzantine army, and developments reached their culmination in 653 when Theodore Rshtuni, the *sparapet* or supreme commander, pledged the subjugation of Armenia to Mu'awiya. In 653, Emperor Constans II left Armenia after campaigning indecisively, effectively allowing Habib ibn Maslama to conquer the country. While Byzantine attention focused on the naval "Battle of the Masts" in 655, the Muslims consolidated their control over Armenia by capturing Theodosiopolis/Karin and deporting Theodore Rshtuni, who died in Syria in 656. Between 654 and 661, Hamazasp Mamikonian was supreme commander of the Armenians, and in 656, during the outbreak of Muslim civil war, led a rebellion. In 659, Mu'awiya imposed a heavy truce on Byzantium,

after which, in 661, Habib ibn Maslama invaded Armenia. Finally, in 662, Mu'awiya, who had become the caliph, recognized Grigor Mamikonian as commander of Armenians, and Armenia began to pay tribute. In the same year, the Muslims from Syria took advantage of Emperor Constans II's expedition to the west by accomplishing their first "wintering" in Anatolia under Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan in A.H. 42 (662-63 A.D.).⁵⁶ Numerous "winterings" there by the Muslims would make any Byzantine thoughts of recovering the territory around Amida and Edessa impractical. The first stage in the Byzantine-Muslim struggle for control of Armenia had resulted in Muslim victory. The conquest of Edessa and Amida and neighboring towns were critical prerequisites for successful Muslim operations in Armenia.

There have been serious scholarly disputes about the correct chronology, direction, nature, and causes of the earliest Muslim invasions and conquest of Byzantine Armenian areas. The actual Late Roman/Byzantine provincial divisions recognized Armenia I, II, III, and IV, but Armenians also populated other provinces in considerable numbers.⁵⁷ It is unnecessary here to review the basic chronology of the Muslim invasions and conquest first established by Ghazarian at the beginning of the twentieth century,⁵⁸ and reconfirmed by Manandian,⁵⁹ Der Nersessian,⁶⁰ Ter Ghewondyan,⁶¹ Canard,⁶² and Garsoïan.⁶³ This

⁵⁶ Muhammad ibn Sad, *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir* [Book of the Eminent Class], Eduard Sachau, ed., vol. 5 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1904), p. 166, and newer Arabic printing under title *Tabaqat al-kubra*, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dar Sadir lil Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, 1957-68), vol. 5, p. 224. Biographical entry: Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimashq*, vol. 37, p. 114; Azimi, *Tarikh Halab*, p. 177. See Walter Kaegi, "The Earliest Muslim Penetrations into Anatolia," in *Byzantine State and Society, in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, eds. Anna Avramea, Angeliki Laiou, and Evangelos Chrysos (Athens: Center for Byzantine Studies, 2003), pp. 269-82.

⁵⁷ Nina Garsoïan, s.v. "Armenia, Geography," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (1982), pp. 470-74. See also *Geography of Ananias*.

⁵⁸ M. Ghazarian, *Armenien unter der arabischen Herrschaft* (Marburg, 1903); E. Filler, "Quaestiones de Leontii Armenii Historia," *Commentationes Philologicae Ienenses*, vol. 7, fasc. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), pp. 9-11.

⁵⁹ Hacob A. Manandian, "Les invasions arabes en Arménie," *Byzantion* 18 (1948): 163-92.

⁶⁰ Accepted (without citation) by Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Between East and West: Armenia and Its Divided History," in David Talbot Rice, ed., *The Dark Ages*

chronological structure is essentially satisfactory. Stratos' chronological revisions of Manandian are excessively ingenious and not very persuasive, but he rightly emphasizes the importance of Mesopotamia as the starting point for Muslim invasions of Armenia. He concludes that there were two separate invasions in 641 and 642 and rejects the argument for dating the first invasion to late 640. Yet Manandian's chronology is reasonable for the date of Iyad ibn Ghanm's first expedition, not necessarily as Manandian thought to Dvin but at least to Bitlis and Akhlat, both of which accepted Iyad's terms for surrender.⁶⁴ It is possible but uncertain that the expedition, which probably started as a pursuit of retreating Byzantine Armenian troops, extended as far as Dvin. Yet the Muslims faced difficult terrain and probably had a limited initial goal of consolidating control over Mesopotamia. Of course, Iyad ibn Ghanm was sufficiently opportunistic to take advantage of chances for enriching himself by plundering Armenian towns and countryside. Whatever the case, it is now clear that the first and most serious Muslim invasions of Armenian territories came not from the direction of Persia and Azerbaijan, or even from Iraq, but from Syria and Mesopotamia.⁶⁵ There is

(London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 76, who dates the Arab invasions to 640, 642-43, and 650.

⁶¹ Aram N. Ter-Ghewondyan, "L'Arménie et la conquête arabe," in Dickran Kouymjian, ed., *Armenian Studies/Etudes Arméniennes in Memoriam Haïg Berbérian* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986), pp. 773-92. See also Aram Ter-Ghewondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia*, trans. Nina Garsoïan (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1976), pp. 1-31, 46-47.

⁶² Joseph Laurent, *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam depuis la conquête arabe jusqu'en 986* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1919; rev. ed., M. Canard: Lisbon: Bertrand, 1980), pp. 44, 55-56, 125, 236, 401-02. See also Marius Canard, "Arminiya," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2d ed., vol. 1 (1960), pp. 634-36. René Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie des origines à 1071* (Paris: Payot, 1973), pp. 296-98.

⁶³ Nina Garsoïan, s.v. "Armenia, History of," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (1982), p. 478.

⁶⁴ Andreas N. Stratos, *Vyzantion ston Z' aiona* (Athens: Estia, 1965-1977), vol. 4, pp. 24-37, and Appendix IV, pp. 276-78, used no untranslated Arabic sources. Gérard Dédéyan, *Histoire des Arméniens* (Toulouse: Privat, 1982), p. 187, accepts the date of October 6, 640 for the Muslim capture and pillage of Dvin.

⁶⁵ There is no new information on Armenia in Ralph J. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber* (Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und

no evidence concerning the fate or flight of Armenian communities in and around Edessa and Amida at the time of the Muslim conquests, but both cities, especially Edessa, figured strongly in the historical events culminating in the Arab invasion and conquest of Armenia.

Neugriechische Philologie, 1976), which focuses on areas to the west. The text of Vardan Areveltsi published and studied by Joseph Muyltermans, *La domination arabe en Arménie* (Louvain: J.-B. Istaş, 1927), is a derivative chronicle.